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APPENDIX I Ancient Art and Modern Archaeology

MUCH OF OUR KNOWLEDGE of early Central Asian history has come as a result of late nineteenth and early twentieth century efforts of European scholars to explore the ruined cities which had lain long buried under the sands. The most widely known of these archaeological expeditions were carried out by Sir Aurel Stein under the sponsorship of the Government of India, and by Professors Albert Grünwedel and Albert von Le Coq of the National Ethnological Museum in Berlin. Others were undertaken by D. Klementz (1897–1898), the Berezowsky brothers (1906), and S. Oldenbourg (1909–1910), all Russians; Paul Pelliot (1906–1909), French; and Tachibana (1910–1911), and Otani (1902 or 1903), both Japanese. 172•

Stein made three trips, in 1900–1901, 1906–1908, and 1913–1916; his primary area of concentration in Turkistan was the network of desert routes and oases from Khotan to Lob Nor. The materials which Stein brought back have been deposited partly in the British Museum in London and partly in the Museum for Central Asian Antiquities in New Delhi. A considerable portion of his finds are reproduced in plates — one full volume of which accompanies each of his three detailed reports: *Ancient Khotan*, *Serindia*, and *Innermost Asia*. (These books also deal with Stein's explorations and excavations in some of the northern oases of the Tarim Basin as well as in Iran and western China.)

The four German "Turfan" Expeditions (so-called from the

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172 goal of the first party) worked along the northern route from Maralbashi to Turfan in the years 1902–1903, 1904–1905, 1905–1907 and 1913–1914. Their collections were shipped back to Berlin, where the greater part of the wall paintings were destroyed by Allied bombing in the recent war. Excellent pictures, however, are available in the seven volumes of Le Coq's *Die Buddhistische Spätantike in Mittel Asien;* in Le Coq's *Chotscho,* and in Grünwedel's *Alt-Kutscha.* Grünwedel's narrative reports on the first and third expeditions, *Bericht über archaeologische Arbeiten* and *Alt-buddhistische Kultstätten,* are also illustrated lavishly with line drawings, plans, and sketches made on the spot by the author.

At first indifferent to these expeditions and their work, the Chinese Government later took note of the great packing cases of art treasures being shipped out of the country. Archaeological operations were thenceforward discouraged and officially hindered in every way. But already by the time of the first World War the known sites had been practically denuded. Easily available ruins had already suffered greatly from the local population who, as good Moslems, felt bound to destroy heathen idols and especially to deface representations of human beings. What the European excavators uncovered but did not remove has largely succumbed to the elements and to the later efforts of treasure seekers.

172 778 Important artistic discoveries were made at about a dozen spots. Starting at the southern edge of the Taklamakan Desert near Khotan — which was the capital of an ancient kingdom — we find the sand-covered ruins of a settlement at Dandan Oilik, and of a great stupa (dome-shaped Buddhist shrine) at Rawak. Farther east, near the place where the Niya River dies in the dunes, lie the indications of another town. A ruined Tibetan fort at Miran, in the neighborhood of Charklik, guards the ruins of a much earlier group of Buddhist shrines. On the northern rim of the desert atop spurs of the foothills of the Tien Shan range stand the temples at Tumshuk, close to Maralbashi, and the great temples at Subashi and Duldur-akhur above the Kucha oasis.

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Also in the environs of Kucha, which is known to have been the center of a large and thriving principality, are the *Ming Oi* (literally "thousand houses") of Kyzyl, Kumtura, and Kiris. Those cave temples are cut out of the solid rock of cliffsides where rivers coming down from the high mountains have cut steep ravines. At Shorchuk, between Korla and Kharashahr, stand the ruins of an ancient walled town with many temples and burial monuments; as at Kucha, the local people refer to the shrines as *Ming Oi.*

The Turfan Depression, with its twin oases of Turfan and Kharakhoja, is particularly rich in artistic remains. Two old towns could be traced here: the more ancient one was in utter ruins but Khocho ("Chotscho"), the capital of the Uighur Kings of Turfan from the ninth through the thirteenth century, had numerous temples, monasteries, and tombs which generously rewarded excavation. In the rocky ravines near Khocho are great clusters of shrines and monastic dwellings both cut out of the cliffs and built on the banks. Most notable are the temples and stupas of the Tuyok Valley and the Sangim Gorge, and the great monastery terrace of Bezeklik (also sometimes called *Ming Oi*).

One further site which should perhaps be included is Khotan itself. Although structural remains of the old capital are limited to doubtful mounds of debris, large quantities of interesting metal and pottery objects of undoubted antiquity have been dug up in the oasis.

With few exceptions the structures of which any traces remain are of a clearly religious character. They can usually be distinguished as shrines, temples, burial monuments, or various parts of monastic establishments. Everywhere but in the Turfan basin, the religion is exclusively Buddhist. A few of the buildings in the old city of Khocho display murals of Nestorian Christian and Manichaean inspiration, and manuscript remains in the area confirm the coexistence in Turfan of these three faiths for several centuries.

Apart from temples cut out of rock, construction is generally of sun-dried bricks, stamped clay, or some sort of mud plaster

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172 778 341 strengthened by twigs and beams. As might be expected with such building materials, the architecture is generally simple and undistinguished. A few structures rise twenty or thirty feet; some boast true arches and some have several stories. In general the models followed are Indian and Iranian. The three basic elements of every shrine, whether rock-cut or free-standing, are a square or circular cell, a large statue or symbol of Buddha, and a passage permitting processions to go completely around the Buddha image.

172 778 531 In addition to the central Buddha figure the temples were often decorated lavishly with other sculptured Buddhas, Bodhisattvas (beings destined to attain Buddhahood) goddesses, Lopakalas (guardians of the directions), and so forth. The statues ranged in dimension from slightly over life-size figures in almost full relief to small sitting Buddhas surrounded by aureoles which were used as decorative elements together with floral and leaf motifs. Commonly the figures were made of stucco or mud strengthened with reeds or straw at the core.

They appear to have been cast in molds, often with separate forms for face, hair, ears, arms, legs and other parts; then joined together and attached to the wall. Variations could be introduced in the facial expression in the finishing-off process before the statue was completely dry. Afterwards it was coated with a thin layer of clay or plaster, painted with water colors, and gilded with gold leaf. Although in many cases the pigments have been washed away or destroyed, all figures seem to have been originally touched up in this way. In some temples whole walls were covered with a succession of such statues but sculptural representations of scenes comprising more than one figure are rare.

172 778 532 Even more striking than the statues are the mural paintings. Almost every inner wall and ceiling is completely covered with frescoes. Large dramatic compositions depicting scenes in the life story of the Buddha or the various future Buddhas are framed in decorative bands and flanked, perhaps, by row upon row of seated Buddhas. Overhead vaults are filled in with stylized moun-

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tain landscapes made up of many small segments each of which illustrates a Buddhist legend. Winged Gandharvas (a kind of angel) and celestial musicians may be fitted into triangular spaces above eye level so as to give the impression of floating above the worshiper. Animals real and fabulous, flowers, trees, palaces, war equipment, and pleasures of the hunt are among the many subjects included in the relations of the various myths or the surrounding ornaments. Well-known divinities of classical Greece as well as many-armed Indian gods are to be found adopted into the Buddhist pantheon. Some frescoes consist of assemblages of these divinities. Others depict Buddhist heavens and hells. A frequent sight is that of Buddha preaching to a group of monks. Monks are also pictured together with benefactors — noblemen through whose contributions the holy work of temple decoration has been financed.

The donors are typically represented in the clothing of the locality and the age, as contrasted with the monks and divine figures whose costume is prescribed by the canons of Buddhist art. Even more interesting are the facial and other physical characteristics of these patrons. Here we have an astounding variety of human types — European and Levantine as well as eastern Asiatic. The evidences would point to a succession of alien conquests with each new set of rulers inscribing themselves as patrons of the existing Buddhist monasteries. Since, however, the warriors generally came from peoples of lower material and artistic level, their tastes did not greatly or immediately affect the content and style of the monastic art. The paintings appear to have been made either by monks themselves or by artists working under rather close religious supervision.

All frescoes are in tempera or water color applied directly to the smoothed and plastered wall while the surface was still wet. In each group of shrines the palette is limited to a modest number of colors and tones. The few colors used are employed with considerable effect. Gold leaf is occasionally added. In some instances the drawing appears to have been by means of tracings

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172 778 or stencils; more typically the murals were sketched in with a free hand. A distinctive feature is the emphasis on outlines, which are almost invariably darkened and slightly thickened.

532 In addition to these sculptures and frescoes, there were found several examples of smaller arts. Particularly noteworthy are painted wooden panels which were deposited at the feet of Buddha statues as votive offerings. Some paintings on paper and on fabric appear to have been designed for the same purpose, or for temple banners. The illustrated Manichaean manuscript fragments found in Khocho are amazingly similar to the early medieval Christian book art.

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Among the wooden items are small reliquary caskets and statuettes, as well as carved ceiling beams, brackets, and other structural elements.

Woven or embroidered textiles seem to have been in large part imported into Central Asia from China, Persia, and other areas. Although Khotan was reputedly famous for its rugs, it is impossible to prove that any particular rug fragments are of Khotanese manufacture.

172 531 Among the various ruins the earliest period is represented by the secular dwellings at the Niya site, and by the stupas of Miran. Amid the shifting sands and scrub-covered cones in the desert north of the present village of Niya, Sir Aurel Stein was able to trace remains of a whole community. In addition to the ever-present stupa there were ancient houses, courtyards, cattlesheds, arbors, orchards, trellises, irrigation canals, and even a footbridge over the old river bed. Broken wooden posts rising above the gaunt earth proved to be the original supports of wattle and plaster walls of old residences.

Some houses of substantial size suggested that the occupants were men of position. From the drift-sand filling the floors of the rooms Stein was able to salvage fairly well-preserved wooden beams and brackets fallen from the ceilings, and fragments of furniture such as chair legs. These were carved with animals, rosettes, pots of leaves and other decorative motifs particularly characteristic of the Gandhara school of sculpture which flour-

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ished in the area of India's northwestern frontier in the first and second centuries after Christ. This art is often described as "late classical," or referred to as Graeco-Buddhist, since its content was Buddhist while the style was strongly affected by the Greek art of the Hellenistic (post Alexandrian) kingdoms of western Asia. 172 • 531

Stein also uncovered at Niya a large central hall with stuccoed walls still standing several feet high. These were decorated in tempera with a colorful design of floral scrolls and festoons. Coins and dated documents on wooden tablets indicated that the settlement was abandoned near the end of the third century A.D.

In the time of its prosperity Niya seems to have been included in the territory not of ancient Khotan but of the kingdom of Kroraina which stretched to the shores of the Lob lake. The rulers of Kroraina were probably most closely allied in culture and language with the Kushan kings of Gandhara and northern India; but in the Tarim Basin they came under Chinese hegemony. Ruins of a town called "Lou-lan" (the Chinese transliteration of *Kroraina*) were discovered by Sven Hedin near the edge of the old lake bed; and Aurel Stein found in the homes and shrines of Lou-lan carved woodwork of the same types as at Niya. 172

Further remains of the Kroraina realm are the third- and early fourth-century temples at Miran, where the earliest of the Central Asian wall paintings were found. The frescoes originally adorned the interior walls of two small domed shrines. Both were square structures on the outside and circular within, with a small stupa in the center. In each the passage around the stupa was decorated with a band of painted busts: youthful winged male angels in one shrine, garland-bearing lads interspersed with a great variety of cosmopolitan-looking men and women in the other. The upper wall and dome showed more conventional religious scenes such as Buddha preaching to a group of monks, and Buddhist legends. 172 532

In coloring, painting technique, and total effect, these Miran murals resemble amazingly the Hellenistic frescoes of approximately the same period which have been discovered at Fayum in Egypt and Dura-Europos in Syria. An inscription on the thigh

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172 532 of a white elephant in one of the Miran pictures records the name of the painter as "Tita," which Sir Aurel Stein takes to be a rendering of the Roman name Titus. Stein fancies that the artist was a "Roman Eurasian" who had followed his calling eastward along the highroad to China. A larger temple also at Miran displayed along its base a series of statues of seated Buddhas about double natural size. The stylized hair curls, elongated ears, and elaborate drapery of these figures once again suggested that they followed the Gandhara models.

Stein also discovered a vast gallery of statues of a similar type lining both the inner and outer faces of a wall enclosing the court of a great stupa at the desert site of Rawak, not far from Khotan. Buddhas and other sacred figures of varying dimensions were ranged side by side, with little apparent order. While most of these figures were draped in classical flowing garments, the Dvarpalas (Guardians of the Gates) wore a secular costume consisting of long under- and overcoats, trousers, and boots. No manuscripts or coins, however, could be found to give definite clues to the age of the ruin.

Far superior to the Miran and Rawak sculptures and much closer in feeling to the art of the ancient Hellenistic world are the statuettes of wood and clay and the broken-off heads of statues found at Tumshuk, by Pelliot and Le Coq. Just north of the oasis town of Maralbashi, the Tumshuk ruins are not far from Kashgar and Yarkand, where routes through the high Pamirs lead into the Tarim Basin from the west. Three flat-topped cliffs rising above the marshy plain bear the remains of temple clusters of various dates. The earliest shrines appear to have been destroyed by fire before the beginning of the fifth century. It was in these that the Gandhara-style pieces were found. A few surviving fresco fragments include a frieze of kneeling monks and a scene of Buddha preaching to armed and regally garbed followers.

The great mass of painting and sculpture illustrating the middle period in Central Asian art — from the fifth century to the eighth century A.D. — comes from the neighborhood of Kucha.

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The *Ming Oi* of Kyzyl comprise several hundred rock-cut caves ranged along several levels on a series of steep cliffs overlooking the Muzart River. In addition to temples of various sizes there were workrooms, storerooms, and sleeping quarters. The most common type of shrine consisted of a square room with a niche for a sacred image in the center of the wall opposite the door. On either side of the statue, a corridor led back to a transverse passage, permitting the worshiper to make the required complete circle about the image. The ceiling was usually in the form of a barrel vault. A few temples had round cupolas and a few others had stone-cut imitations of the "lantern" roof (composed of a series of squares of diminishing size laid diagonally one above the other and leaving open a small aperture at the very top) still found today in Persia and Kashmir. Each of these cell-like temples was furnished with a small vestibule. Long stone balconies and flights of steps gave access to the temples and connected them with each other. Practically no daylight penetrated to the inside of the cells; the decorations must have been executed and enjoyed only by use of lamps.

Le Coq and Grünwedel were able to uncover wall paintings in some sixty of these caves. The frescoes abound in drama and motion. Buddha, in the scenes from his life and in the familiar teaching, meditating, and other poses, is given a human and gentle aspect. The Bodhisattvas, worshipers, kings, queens, Brahmans, ascetics, monks, dancers, musicians, servants, demons, and other personages who surround the Buddha or play roles in the illustrations of the Buddhist legends display a great variety of complexion, feature, figure, garb, expression, and pose. All appear to be active participants: a courtier turns his head to talk to a neighbor; two Brahmans carry on a lively dispute; a supplicant prostrates himself at Buddha's feet. In one particularly effective panel, a king who is taking a ceremonial bath in a tub of butter receives news of Buddha's demise by means of a painted cloth held up before him by a minister. On the cloth are pictured the four "great events": the birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and

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172 532 death of Buddha. Several depictions of the burning of Buddha's corpse are notable for the intensity of sorrow communicated by the mourners.

Although the compositions are intricate and the available space tightly packed with figures and background designs, the main contours stand out clearly. Color schemes are based on muted brown, flesh, and rust tones, accented with bright blue and green.

The donors portrayed in the Kyzyl caves (usually on the wall near the entrance) are at first glance astonishingly like knights and ladies of medieval Europe. Tall, fair-skinned, and red-haired, they wear dresses and armor of the style prevailing in Persia under the Sassanian Dynasty from the third through the seventh centuries. The cloaks and gowns appear to be of fine brocade or richly embroidered material. An unusual hair arrangement in which the top locks are cut to a length of about four inches and allowed to fall loose on either side of a center part is characteristic of both men and women. Frequently a stylized flower, perhaps a development of the classical cornucopia carried by certain figures in the Gandhara sculptures, is held in the hand.

Both the style of the paintings and the decorative motifs employed give evidence of a blending of Indian, Persian and late Hellenistic influences. Many resemblances can be pointed out between these Kyzyl murals and the famed wall paintings of the Ajanta cave temples in Central India, which were executed at roughly the same time. Only rarely, however, do the figures in the Kyzyl pantomimes approach the sinuous grace and delicacy of the best work at Ajanta. Perhaps the closest comparison, outside of the Tarim Basin, is with the frescoes in the caves surrounding the colossal Buddha in the valley of Bamian, near Kabul, in Afghanistan. Chemical analysis has indicated that identical pigments were used. This tie between Kucha and Bamian, which had been a Buddhist center since about 100 A.D., suggests one path along which Buddhist art progressed into Central Asia.

[778] At Kumtura, about nine miles east of Kyzyl along the Muzart River, is another group of cave temples. As at Kyzyl the various temples could be placed approximately as belonging to the fifth,

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sixth, seventh or eighth centuries. Similar architectural styles were followed and similar medieval-looking benefactors were depicted. In subject matter and treatment the paintings are clearly related, but in some of the Kumtura caves is an unmistakable Chinese element, nowhere glimpsed at Kyzyl. The eyes of the Buddhas are just slightly tilted, the landscapes are more freely drawn, and typical T'ang Dynasty cloud forms appear overhead.

Sculptural remains brought from Kyzyl and Kumtura consist mainly of severed heads of goddesses, Bodhisattvas, Brahmans and other personages. The statues were sometimes grouped on balconies, sometimes arranged in separate niches along the walls. The heritage of the Graeco-Buddhist traditions of Gandhara is amply demonstrated in facial features, hair treatment, head ornaments, and, where full figures are shown, in the drapery.

Contemporary with the Kyzyl and Kumtura caves but quite different in style are the group of shrines belonging to an old monastery at Dandan Oilik (in the words of local treasure seekers, "the place of houses with ivory") in the desert near Khotan. Each shrine originally consisted of a square inner cell enclosing a large Buddha statue on a pedestal. This cell was surrounded by a square perambulatory. Both inner and outer walls were decorated with paintings — for the most part of large Buddhas or saints in a checkerboard pattern. On the whole these figures are stiff and rather indifferently drawn. A few representations of legendary scenes include one particularly graceful water nymph of decidedly Indian inspiration. The donors, pictured as tiny figures kneeling at the feet of the large Buddhas, are markedly Chinese or Mongol in appearance.

Decorative stucco reliefs of small Buddhas, saints, and flying Gandharvas, and remains of larger statues, followed the Graeco-Buddhist pattern but achieved no particular distinction. Perhaps the most interesting art finds of the Dandan Oilik site are the considerable number of rectangular wooden panels each about a foot long. They were apparently intended as gifts to the shrine from secular patrons. On these tablets appear sure-handed and

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spirited sketches of Buddhist divinities and legends, some in full color. A particularly attractive drawing shows Rustan, the great Persian hero, as a handsome four-armed Bodhisattva.

Dandan Oilik, by all indications, was abandoned gradually, because of increasing difficulty of irrigation, around the end of the eighth century.

The art of the ancient city at Shorchuk near the Kharashahr oasis reaches into the third and final stage of the Buddhist culture of the Tarim Basin. On the direct route eastward from Kucha to Turfan, Kharashahr was never so important a political power or Buddhist center as its neighbors. Nonetheless great numbers of temples and shrines were found both in the old town and on the ridges of the mountains at its side; there were also a few cave temples cut out of the hills. Most of the shrines appear to have been destroyed by fire in the tenth century, but to have existed for several hundred years before that. The ruins were particularly rich in statuary, many pieces retaining the original coat of bright paints. As well as the familiar Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and goddesses in more or less pure Hellenistic style, there were found deities of distinctly oriental appearance and some remarkably realistic horses and camels. Many examples were provided of the variety of heads which could be produced by skillful use of a limited number of molds.

The Shorchuk wall paintings ascribed to the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries demonstrated even more clearly than the sculpture the intermingling of eastern and western peoples and cultures. The Buddhas, monks and Gandharvas of these frescoes have consistently Far Eastern features, but each monk carries between his prayer-joined palms a long-stemmed flower reminiscent of those held by the donors of Kyzyl. The benefactresses at Shorchuk are slant-eyed, long-nosed, and rather stocky women who can be identified with considerable confidence as belonging to one of the tribes of Western Turks which held sway over Kharashahr for some centuries. The use of deep colors and the presence of stylistic details such as very cursive outlines show strong Chinese influences.

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The latest phase of Central Asian art is most amply illustrated in the Turfan region. The oases of Turfan and Kara Khoja, strategically placed for intercourse both with China to the east and the grazing lands of Jungaria to the north, served as the seats of more or less powerful kingdoms from before the beginning of the present era. The various archaeological explorations found not only two old capitals, Yar Khoto ("the city on the ravine") and Khocho (Kao ch'ang in Chinese; also Idikutshahri and Dakianus) but a number of semi-isolated monastic establishments in the environs. Pieces of sculpture, paintings on paper and silk and various other small objects of art were purchased from local treasure seekers as well as directly excavated. In the circumstances, the dating of many finds is only conjectural. Several markedly Hellenistic heads fall in this category.

Certain buildings within the old city of Khocho and a few of the sites at Toyuk, Chikkan Kol, and Bezeklik have been clearly shown to belong to the sixth and seventh century. The extant wall paintings in these ruins are on the whole similar to those of the Kucha and Kharashahr oases. In some of these temples, painted medallions on the ceilings substitute for the earlier carved-out imitations of the lantern roof.

From the middle of the eighth century Turfan came under the rule of the Uighur Turks. Before coming to Turfan the ruling Uighur Khans had been converted to Manichaeism, a religion of Persian origin based on the opposition of Light (signifying Good) and Darkness (symbolizing Evil). In Turfan the Uighurs appear to have patronized Buddhism as well as Manichaeism and seem to have permitted Syrian or Nestorian Christians to follow their own faith. A mural which seems to be Christian in character was found covered up by an inner wall in a small temple outside the city walls of Khocho. A priest, in vestments which are clearly neither Buddhist nor Manichaean, holds incense in one hand, a vessel of holy water in the other. He appears to be blessing three persons of smaller stature who approach him, each carrying a long-stemmed leafy branch. The worshipers have the slant eyes of the Orient but the priest appears Byzantine.

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172 532 A fine Manichaean wall painting showing a priest of Persian features, possibly Mani himself, dressed in full canonicals and followed by several ranks of white-gowned and tall-bonneted *electi* (devotees under special vows of purity and abstinence), was similarly discovered behind a single layer of bricks. Presumably temples were cleared in this way for other types of worship. Illuminated pages of Manichaean religious texts and Manichaean temple banners, also found in various places in and near Khocho, show the disciples in the same costumes. Both men and women (*electi* and *electae*) are pictured, sometimes with hands clasped at the bosom and hidden muff-like in the robe, sometimes carrying or writing in books. In the book roll fragments and pages, the pictures and text, in a special Manichaean script, are combined to produce a total effect very similar to the early Christian codices of medieval Europe. Bright clear colors are used and the designs are kept fairly simple. Although unmistakably related to the general development of Central Asian art, the Manichaean finds actually constitute a separate and exotic growth with roots deep in third-century Sassanian Persia from which Mani himself sprang.

172 532 778 Buddhist art in Uighur times is best exemplified by the wall paintings of the vast majority of the temples at Bezeklik ("the place where there are decorations") near the village of Murtuk. Here a great phalanx of free-standing structures and rock-cut caves, some with structural antechambers, occupied a protected ledge between the river and the mountains. Hundreds of separate temples were still preserved in various stages of disrepair at the beginning of the present century.

A splendidly preserved set of murals was discovered in the temple which Le Coq numbered 9. Separate panels depicted groups of Indian monks in yellow with their individual names supplied in an Indian script, and Far Eastern monks in violet with both Chinese and Uighur names. All carried single long-stemmed flowers. The main pattern of decoration consisted in a series of Pranidhi or prayer scenes. Each one shows a large standing Buddha elaborately garbed and bejeweled and surrounded by an

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elongated aureole. From five to ten figures are disposed about the Buddha in vertical columns on either side. Usually the two at the base kneel and present gifts such as food, lamps, or trays of flowers. A small Chinese house in a compound frequently is found in a top corner. Some of the worshipers are highly individualized and would seem to be portraits of particular monks or in one case of secular persons who are perhaps merchants. Other monks, however, and characters identifiable as Brahmans, spear-bearers, goddesses, youthful Bodhisattvas, and so forth appear in highly schematized fashion. The facial features of the Buddhas and the stylized attendant personages approximate a single type with narrow eyes, long noses, heavy jowls, and often a hairline mustache. The monks who seem to be drawn from life, however, exhibit much more variety. Several have red hair with blue or green eyes; some show red or gray stubble on the shaven pate, cheeks, and chin. Story elements are reduced to an almost unnoticeable minimum — a tiny raft underneath the feet of the Buddha, for instance, indicates that a seagoing legend is involved. Detail, in fact, rather than composition differentiates one Pranidhi scene from another. Profusion of ornament, sureness of line, and careful symmetry all contribute to an effect of great elegance and sophistication.

Occasionally tiny figures of donors are tucked in near the feet of the Buddha in the Pranidhi scenes. Full-scale pictures of the Uighur benefactors adorn small walls near the entrance of the inner temple. Like portraits of Uighur nobles in other shrines they show strong-visaged men with small mustaches and waist-length braids of black hair. They wear tall headdresses and floor-length gowns of embroidered material. The women have an elaborate puffed coiffure topped by a sort of crown. Once again each benefactor holds a blossoming stalk. Considerable care has been taken to present these donors as individuals and the names of many are inscribed on vertical tablets near the heads.

In addition to Pranidhi scenes and portraits of donors, the Bezeklik murals and the other wall paintings in the Khocho area dating from the Uighur period (ninth through twelfth century

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A.D.) cover a wide array of subjects associated with the Mahayana sect of Buddhism. There are representations of the particular heavens associated with various deities, and elaborate depictions of the tortures of hell. Chinese motifs appear in every context: deities sit in the windows of Chinese-style houses; children with Chinese-style pigtails sport on balconies. Particularly frightful demons with flowing hair, popping eyes and several arms are also common.

The end of Buddhist art in Turfan appears to have come with the invasion of Jenghis Khan and the period of Mongol wars. The Uighur kings, who held on to the area a short while longer by submitting to Mongol suzerainty, turned with the Mongols to Islam. But great numbers of the people remained Buddhists right up to the fifteenth century. Many of the temples at such places as Bezeklik and the Sangim Gorge probably continued in use as places of worship and pilgrimage to that time.

Between the early murals of Miran and the latest work in the Turfan area lie almost a thousand years. Throughout this millennium a characteristic form of temple art flourished in the oasis kingdoms and reached occasional heights of outstanding excellence. This remarkable stream of creative production brings into question previous references to the area as no more than a highway connecting the ancient Eastern and Western Worlds, and to its civilization as the culture of the Silk Road. Considering the relatively small dimensions of international trade in ancient times, it would seem extremely unlikely that several dozen or even several hundred camel caravans a year could have supplied the economic foundations for such extensive artistic and religious enterprise. On the other hand the region abounds in evidences of much wider areas of cultivation supporting a much larger population in former periods than today. This agricultural prosperity, based on the known richness of the soil when properly irrigated, would go much further than the commerce of the silk route to explain not only why the Tarim Basin could afford so many monasteries and temples, but why it attracted a continuous stream of invaders.

CHINESE CENTRAL ASIA

It is a great place for the treasure-seekers, known as "Taklamakanchis," who are to be found all along the fringe of the great desert; ragged, ever-hopeful men of the tramp type who spend their lives ransacking the remains of ancient Buddhist tombs and temples far out among the sands of the Takla Makan. Occasionally these men find a few coins or seals or flakes of gold-leaf used in decoration; but I never heard of any one of them becoming rich in the process. From the archæological point of view, the activities of the ubiquitous Taklamakanchis cut both ways; Stein acknowledges many debts to them, including assistance, direct or indirect, in the discovery of his chief sites; but he had far oftener to deplore the damage done by them to tombs and temples, stupas and dwelling-houses.

Zawa, 23rd November, 1922.

We are no longer in "Kashgaria" now; we are in the ancient land of Khotan, the "Kingdom of Jade." There is a distinct edge-of-the-desert feel about the countryside, fertile and closely-cultivated though it is. You notice it first when you come to Goma after the long desert stretch from Karghalik. You are getting further east; the great Takla Makan on your left hand is nearly at its broadest; the Kunlun on your right is an arid range. Now and again, quite unexpectedly, you come upon a belt of desert or a village islanded in sand; for here, as in Kansu far to the east, the inexorable "Gobi"—the word means merely "desert"—is encroaching from the north-west, pushing the thin line of cultivation back against the fifteen-hundred mile-long wall of Tibet. One whole village we passed was in its death-throes; a spear-head of dunes from the north had pinned it against the barren foothills, and all the houses had been abandoned except two or three to which the owners still clung pathetically though the sand was heaped right up to the roof. The loess soil in these parts, though apparently no less prolific when watered, is lighter both in weight and in colour than the yellow loess of Kashgar. The climate is evidently warmer, as one would expect, for the houses of the poor are all of wattles plastered with mud, unlike the solid mud-brick structures of the Kashgar oasis. The people too are more vivacious and excitable, as befits the south; one notices it at once in the small boys, whose enterprise and cheekiness in pursuit of a *tamasha* (*e.g.* a foreign traveller and his wife) has to be seen to be believed. The inhabitants of the southern oases are great pigeon-lovers. Outside every farm-house you will see tall poles with cross-poles at the top and rows of fat pigeons roosting on them at sunset. If you sprinkle grain on the sand at the *Kaptar Mazar* or Pigeon Shrine of Qum-rabat Padshahim (literally, My King's Castle in the Sand) in the desert between Goma and Khotan, thousands of pigeons will stream out to meet you, a sort of Milky Way of pigeons, and the sound of their cooing and of their myriad wings is like the sea.

Khotan, 24th November, 1922.

This afternoon, eight miles from Khotan, we stopped at an ornate building opening off the bazaar of a small town. The masons were still at work and a stone-carver was chiselling away at a lengthy inscription in Turki on the outer face of the gateway. The legend

[1] [i.e. Goma on the Takla Makan - Analyst]

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

influences from the China of the Han and Tang Emperors mingled with those transmitted through Iran and North-West India from the great world of Hellenism in the West. It was through the channel of the Tarim Basin and the medium of its settled populations that the fame of the "silk-weaving Seres" and the fine products of Chinese looms reached the Mediterranean and became known throughout the Roman Empire. It was by this same route that the elements of Indian as well as of Græco-Roman art and culture reached China's western borders. More important still, it was along the Khotan road that Buddhism, in Stein's words "India's greatest contribution to the spiritual development of mankind," found its roundabout way in the first century of our era to China through the Central Asian kingdoms.

It would be presumption for me to attempt even the briefest survey of the immense field covered by the archæological discoveries of Sir Aurel Stein among the sands of the Takla Makan and elsewhere in Chinese Turkistan and Kansu. I can but refer the art-loving reader to those monuments of fascinating if recondite erudition, "Ruins of Desert Cathay," "Serindia," and the rest. Here will be brought vividly before his eyes the splendour of Khotan's Græco-Buddhist civilization, in the days when that ancient kingdom was culturally an Indian colony.[1] He will discover for himself how exquisitely that civilization was tinged by the classic art of China; he will see, on the other hand, how in the east of the province and along the great Silk Road the powerful influences of Græco-Buddhist and even of purely Persian art modified the work of Chinese masters. The frescoes of Miran, the classical seals of Yotkan, the relievos of Khadaliq, the wood-carvings of Niya, the amazing painted silks, brocades, tapestries and embroideries of the Cave of the Thousand Buddhas—these and many other beautiful things appeal to the lover of art, and not to him alone. They appeal even more strongly to the Western student of *les vieilles civilisations qualitatives*, as Ferrero calls them, which aimed at perfection rather than progress or power—the old civilizations which we have so ruthlessly destroyed in our pursuit of wealth and our conquest of the earth, and which now, too late, we find to be our lost Paradise.

My few excursions into this field of research may be dismissed briefly. In the course of long tours on Consular duty, when our programme had to be thought out carefully beforehand

[1] "Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. I, p. 290–91.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

• 172 and the time spent on the road and at towns reduced to a minimum in order that the ground might be covered, it would have been impossible for me to attempt any excavation or systematic clearing of new sites, even if I had wished to disregard Sir Aurel's injunction not to "dig up tombs." North of Domoko on the Khotan-Keriya road, in the wilderness of tamarisk-cones on the edge of the great desert, we found after a long search Sir Aurel's "Khadaliq" site, and photographed it in order to ascertain the extent to which it had been silted up by drift-sand since excavation. On our second visit to Keriya, in April, 1924, a British subject called Abbas Khan brought me two fine specimens of ancient weaving-combs, heavy wooden instruments with a row of short teeth with which carpet-weavers "pack" the pile on the warp, also a recumbent angel in stucco in excellent condition and some very fragmentary leaves of Kharosthi manuscript. He said he had taken these from an ancient site he had discovered the previous year one "potai" (2½ miles) north of Stein's Khadaliq site. He described a loess mound or hill "a hundred *gaz* high" (200 feet—an obvious exaggeration), in which he had dug to a depth of about 12 feet, with great difficulty, as the earth was continually collapsing on top of him; he had then come to a chamber with plaster frescoes on all four walls and the roof supported by wooden columns. As he worked three of the walls collapsed and the frescoes were destroyed, but the fourth remained in position. It contained a picture 3 feet by 2 feet showing men on horses, etc. Other finds were a large mill-stone, too heavy to be turned by hand, and a big earthenware pot with two handles, full of bones, some charred. This latter was found in the mound 3 feet outside the chamber. Abbas Khan's measurements were probably very far out, but there is no reason to suppose that his story was an invention, for he was very anxious that I should go with him and see the place on our return journey. Unfortunately we had already arranged to go home by another route, so that I had no opportunity of examining Abbas Khan's new site.

At Khotan our Armenian friend, Mr. Keraken Moldovack, and the ex-Aqsaqal Khan Sahib Badruddin Khan allowed me to take for presentation to the British Museum a selection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts, Greek plaster masks, terra-cotta figurines and appliqué ornaments, intaglios, vases, paintings on wood and stucco, wooden household implements, coins and other objects collected by them from "Taklama-

[Face p. 170]

PLASTER HEAD OF WOMAN FOUND UNDER SANDS OF TAKLA MAKAN DESERT NEAR KHOTAN [p. 171
(About ⅓ actual size)

SOAPSTONE FIGURE OF SARASWATI AND HER PEACOCK FOUND IN RECENTLY EXPOSED CULTURE-STRATUM AT YOTKAN (Actual size) [illegible]

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3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

172 kanchis" who had brought them back from various desert sites.[1] Our most interesting excursions, however, were in November, 1922, and May, 1924, when we visited the site of Yotkan, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Khotan, some five miles south-west of the modern town. A few months before our first visit a great mass of loess bluff some 20 feet high had fallen away owing to erosion by irrigation water, and had laid bare a new section of the Yotkan "culture stratum" from 2 feet 3 inches to 5 feet 4 inches thick, lying at an average depth of 15 feet below the upper level of the fields. The composition of this stratum was of a stiff bluish clay, and its contents consisted chiefly of potsherds, animal bones, lumps of charcoal, coins and small metal objects corroded almost out of recognition, fragments of white jade, red and green glass and so on. But more valuable and interesting objects had also been found by the treasure-seekers who had been washing the clay of the stratum for gold most of the summer. In this place where "trippers" were unknown it did not seem to occur to these people that we might be ready to buy curios found by them during their washings for gold in the stratum, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we induced them to bring along a few articles they had found. Anything containing gold or precious stones, good jade, etc., had of course been sold in the Khotan bazaar long before, but we succeeded in buying from the villagers a few objects of interest. Of these the best were a beautiful little soapstone figure of the goddess Saraswati and her peacock, a couple of carnelian intaglios and some quaint clay animals.

[1] This small collection, including objects bought at the Yotkan site, at Goma and elsewhere, is at present in the Ethnographical section of the British Museum. The most interesting items are: Twenty-six folios of calligraphic paper MS. in Central-Asian Brahmi of the *Saddharma-pundarika*, a Sanskrit text, one folio of which appears in Dr. Hoernle's "Manuscript Remains of Buddhist Literature"; eleven folios of an eighth-century Buddhist religious work in ancient Khotanese; wooden tablets inscribed with accounts and other documents in Kharosthi; two beautiful plaster masks of female faces in classical Greek style; small intaglios from rings; two square metal seals, one with a classical winged bull intaglio, the other with Chinese lapidary characters similar to the impression of the Chinese official's seal shown in "Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. I, Plate 95 (6); several well-preserved fragments of coloured frescoes illustrating Buddhist legends, similar to those found by Stein at Miran; household implements such as wooden combs, fire-sticks, "hearths," etc., and copper coins of the Han and Tang dynasties.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

773 place for seven days and nights until all was buried. Now the great Buddhist pilgrim Hsuan-tsang who passed this way in the seventh century of our era stayed at a town called Pi-mo, which Stein has conclusively identified with the Uzun-Tati site; and at this place Hsuan-tsang heard an almost exactly parallel Sodom and Gomorrah legend about another buried city called Ho-lo-lo-kia, still further out in the Takla Makan! A similar story is attached to the shrine of Imam Jamal-ud-Din at Keriya; this saint is supposed to have caused the sudden overwhelming of the city of Ketek because of insults he had received from its inhabitants. While at Goma in 1922 I had occasion to interrogate some Taklamakanchis from Qaratagh Aghzi, the "terminal oasis" of the Kilian River, about a new desert site which they said they had found a couple of years previously. At first they were uncommunicative, but afterwards when their tongues were loosened they told me about their discoveries, and many other things as well. One of them described an experience he had had in the neighbourhood. "I was lost one evening in the Takla Makan," he said, "and had no water. Suddenly I saw before me great walls in the sand and a gateway in the midst of them. I passed through the gateway and found myself in the outer court of a huge *yamen*.[1] I went through more doors and courtyards and at last I entered a great hall (*aivān*) which was full of treasure, gold and coral and pearls. But there was a huge tiger on guard there; flames issued from his mouth and I knew he was an evil spirit. I fainted from fear, and when I came to my senses I was among the sands and there was no *yamen*. Next day I came upon the tracks of wood-cutters and found my way home."

172 Sir A. Stein's researches have proved that none of the buried cities of the Takla Makan which have so far been found were overwhelmed by any sudden catastrophe. All were abandoned bit by bit, owing either to a generally-diminishing water-supply, or to the shifting of particular rivers, or to political causes. The Sodom and Gomorrah legends are probably, therefore, quite baseless. But this does not necessarily imply that the ancient tradition about the "Forty Cities of the Takla Makan"—great and populous centres, now buried under the sands far out beyond the furthest explorations of the archæologists—has no foundation in fact. The dawn of history in the Tarim Basin is relatively late, the second

[1] Any palace or large Chinese house is called a "yamen."

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

century before Christ; thousands of years before that dawn the Egyptian, Minoan, Sumerian and other great civilizations existed. Is it impossible that the Tarim Basin, in the heart of that Innermost Asia which is believed by many to be the cradle of the human race, may once have harboured a race as powerful and a culture as advanced as any that flourished on the banks of the Nile, the Euphrates or the Indus?

All depends on the answer to the question: Was the water-supply ever much greater than it is now? In this connection the conclusions of Sir A. Stein in his latest publication[1] are of the utmost interest. Discussing whether the abandonment of Niya, Dandan Oilik and other sites may be assigned to a supposed climatic desiccation of Central Asia, or to some other cause or causes, he points out that definite archæological evidence forces us to two conclusions.

"One is that climatic conditions quite as arid as the present ones prevailed within the big trough of the Tarim Basin as far back as ancient remains and available records can take us. The other conclusion is that the amount of water carried by its rivers has greatly diminished during the same historical period."

How can these apparently contradictory propositions be reconciled? As a possible solution of this problem Sir Aurel propounds a remarkable theory which was verbally suggested to him in 1908 by Colonel Sir Sidney Burrard, late Surveyor-General of India, and recently also proposed by Dr. von Ficker with regard to similar conditions in the Oxus basin.

"This theory" (he says) "seeks the reason for the diminished volume of the rivers in the shrinkage of the glaciers on the high ranges which are their main feeders. It accounts for the shrinkage itself by assuming that those glaciers comprise great reserves of ice which have been left behind by the last glacial period and have since been undergoing slow but continuous reduction through milder climatic conditions. This continued process would suffice to explain shrinkage in the irrigation resources during historical time without the climate of the basin as a whole having in the course of this period, very short in a geological sense as it seems, undergone any appreciable change."

In other words, the glaciers of the Kunlun may be no other than the dwindling remnants of the frozen cap that Asia wore in the last Ice Age. A link with the past indeed!

Sixteen centuries ago even a small stream like the Niya River flowed far out into the desert, watering a flourishing town 20 miles beyond its present disappearing-point at the

[1] "Geographical Journal," June, 1925, pp. 487–90.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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shrine of Imam Ja'far Sadiq.[1] Four or five thousand years ago, presumably, this river and others like it flowed in greater volume still, penetrating far beyond ancient Chingchueh and Dandan Oilik. Those were the days, perhaps, when the great Lop Sea to the east had not altogether dried up, and the "innumerable laughter" of its waves hid what are now the sharp-edged salt clods of the world's worst desert. It may be, then, that in the days when Sargon reigned in Babylon and Manes on the Nile, wide fertile lands and populous cities with a culture and an art of their own basked in the Central Asian sun, and that the glory and the wealth of a forgotten civilization lie hid for ever under the gigantic dunes of the Takla Makan.

[1] "Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan," p. 351.

563 produced in Peking. A report from Peking on January 3, 1955,
538 states that "some 200 books in more than 1.64 million copies
177 were put out in 1954 in Peking in the languages of the minority
668 peoples. They were published by the Nationality Publishing
(214) House for use among the Mongolian, Tibetan, Uighur, Kazakh and Korean peoples. These books include works on revolutionary theory, novels, and translations of Soviet literature. This total does not include books published by the many printing houses of the various minority areas." (Peking, NCNA, January 5, 1955, 1607 GMT-W.)

D. Artistic Expression

175 The period prior to the introduction of Islam produced the
532 great works of art in Eastern Turkestan. The Shamanistic, Buddhist and Nestorian civilizations which were dominant in Eastern Turkestan in this period encouraged the religious expression through the mediums of painting and sculpture.

175 Late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth century,
532 European scholars went to Eastern Turkestan to explore the
• 172 ruined cities which had long been buried under the sands, and which contained many of the pre-Islamic artistic treasures. It is through the efforts of these scholars that we have most of our present information on the subject. Among the best known of these explorers, who carried out extensive expeditions in Sinkiang, were Sir Aurel Stein, Professor Albert Grünwedel and Albert von le Coq of the National Ethnological Museum in Berlin and Paul Pelliot.

(648) Although the Chinese Government was quite tolerant at first and allowed these archaeological works and expeditions to take place, it later became concerned with the fact that so many cases full of artistic treasures were being shipped out of the country. From then on, the Chinese Government tried to put as many official difficulties in the way of these explorers as they could, and discouraged further efforts in this direction.

532 The important artistic discoveries were made at the follow-
172 ing sites: near Khotan, the past capital of an ancient kingdom, at the oasis of Dandan Oilik, and at Rawak where a Buddhist shrine was found, and also in the twin oases of Turfan and Karakhoja, which proved to be extremely rich in artistic remains.

Most of the remaining structures which were fully or partially preserved are of an obviously religious character. They are usually shrines, temples, burial monuments, or various parts of monastic establishments. Most of them are products of Buddhist religious expression. Some buildings display the remains of Nestorian Christian and Manichaean murals. Manu-
(538) scripts were discovered in these sites which confirmed the simultaneous existence of these religions in the area for several centuries.

/Turkic Peoples of Sinkiang/

532
172 centuries.

Most of the religious structures in general followed the Persian and Indian patterns of buildings. Every shrine had a square or circular cell with a large image of Buddha in it, and included a passage where religious processions could take place and go all the way around the Buddha statue. Additional images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and goddesses decorated the temples. The statues ranged in dimension from over-life sized figures in almost full relief to very small figurines of sitting Buddhas.

The inner walls of these temples and the ceiling were often completely covered with frescoes. Dramatic compositions illustrating scenes and episodes from the life of Buddha, stylized mountain landscapes and illustrations of Buddhist legends were the subject matter of these frescoes.

Several examples of smaller art were also found in these temples. Of particular interest are the wooden panels, which were painted, deposited at the feet of the Buddha statues as votive offerings. Among the other kinds of votive offerings were some paintings on fabric or paper.

Sir Aurel Stein discovered the site of the ruins which belonged to the earliest historical period in Sinkiang: the secular dwellings at Niya sites, and the Buddhist shrines at Miran. Sir Aurel Stein found fairly well preserved wooden brackets and beams which had fallen from the ceilings, and parts of furniture. These objects were carved with many animals, flowers, leaves and other decorative motifs. The decorative motifs are strickingly reminiscent of the style of the Bandhara school of sculpture which flourished in India's northwestern frontier in the first and second centuries A.D. This art is often referred to as Greco-Buddhist, as its content is definitely Buddhist while its style is very strongly affected by the Greek art of the Hellenistic kingdoms of Western Asia.

Further remains of the third and early fourth century were found in the temples at Miran. The interior walls of these shrines were full of murals, containing scenes from the life of Buddha, Buddhistic legends, decorated with young men carrying garlands, and youthful male angels. The Miran wall paintings also strongly resemble the Hellenistic frescoes of the same period discovered in the Middle East, both in the techniques employed and in the general effect. Sir Aurel Stein holds the idea that they had been painted by a "Roman Eurasian." A large number of statues of similar nature were discovered by Stein in the temples at the desert site of Rawak, not far from Khotan.

Paul Pelliot and Albert von le Coq found small statues of clay and wood, and some broken heads of statues, which resembled the Hellenistic ancient art even more closely than the murals of Miran and Rawak. They were found in the Tumshuk

532 ruins situated near Kashgar and Yarkand.
• 192 Kucha is the site of many ancient works of sculpture and paintings dating back to the middle period of Central Asiatic art, which covers the period from the fifth to the eighth centuries.

Le Coq and Grünwedel uncovered many murals in the cave temples found in the vicinity of Kucha. The frescoes are characterized by the abundance of drama and motion. Buddha is the main subject of the frescoes, and many scenes from his life, in teaching, meditating and other poses, are portrayed. The other figures surrounding Buddha include the Bodhisattvas, worshippers, Brahmans, monks, dancers, musicians, servants and demons. They all display a great variety of features, figure, clothing, expression and pose. Muted browns, rust and flesh tones, accented with bright blue and green, form the basic color scheme of these frescoes.

(199) A blending of Indian, Iranian and late Hellenistic influences are evident in the style of the paintings and the decorative motifs employed.

The final stage of the pre-Islamic Buddhist culture in the area is represented in the collection found in Karashahr. It consists mostly of statues, some of them still preserving their original coat of paint. In these works of art we find the familiar figures of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and goddesses done in a style which is strongly influenced by the Hellenistic culture. However, here we begin to find dieties of distinctly oriental appearance and some very realistically drawn animals (horses and camels). These wall paintings are ascribed to the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries and strongly illustrate the intermingling of eastern and western civilizations. The features of the figures clearly demonstrate Far Eastern characteristics, and the stylistic devices indicate a strong Chinese influence. (Most of the information on this section comes from Alice Thorner's chapter on Central Asian Art, in Pivot of Asia.)

An important scene of artistic discoveries in Kansu is the Tunhuang oasis, known as the Caves of the Thousand Buddhas, which Sir Aurel Stein visited in 1907. In this oasis hundreds of cave-temples are found, some of them dating to the fourth century A.D. The place was jealously guarded by an illiterate Taoist priest, who allowed Sir Aurel Stein to visit the caves only after a great deal of persuasion. Stein found thousands of paper scrolls, a large number of books in fragments and many paintings on silk and cotton in these caves. Most of the works of art (199) were Buddhist in character, and had a pronounced Chinese influence. A small percentage included Taoist and non-religious documents and works of art.

532 The conversion of the Turkic people of Sinkiang to Islam had
209 tremendous repercussions on the artistic expression of the
197